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If you're tired of an avocado green kitchen or your chipped faux marble countertops, it could be time to give your kitchen a whole new look. A full-blown remodeling, with new cabinets and appliances, can cost up to $50,000—sometimes more. But home improvement expert Danny Lipford visited The Early Show on Wednesday with ideas on how to make a cosmetic upgrade without gutting the whole room.

Lipford is the host of the syndicated show, "Today's Homeowner," and has a Web site with lots of useful tips and information. He says a couple of easy fixes are installing new flooring and repainting. But you'll get the most dramatic change by concentrating on cabinets and countertops, which have the most surface space and, therefore, draw the most attention.

**Countertop Options**

**Plastic laminate:** Inexpensive but durable, this material is available in a huge array of colors, patterns and textures.

**Ceramic tile:** More expensive than the plastic laminates, ceramic tiles also come in a large variety of colors and sizes, from tiny mosaics to one foot square. Lipford says tiles in the 4- to 6-inch range are best for countertops. Some are designed to imitate popular stone surfaces, like travertine, limestone, and even granite. Prices vary widely, with machine-made tile more economical than handmade.

**Solid surfacing:** This stone imitator, often called Corian, is made from plastics...
with a mineral filler. Available in a wide variety of colors and patterns, it has the advantage of being repairable. An abrasive sponge or fine sandpaper will polish out scratches.

**Stone:** Softer stones, like limestone and travertine, are not ideal for kitchens because they absorb stains, as does marble. Lipford suggests limiting marble to a baking area, where it is useful for rolling dough. Granite is a harder, denser stone that doesn't stain as easily and resists wear and hot pots. Part of the charm of stone is that every piece is a little different, showing natural variations. When choosing stone, you can opt for slabs or tiles.

**Engineered stone:** This manufactured material is often referred to as “quartz” because it is more than 90 percent crushed quartz stone. Available in a number of colors and patterns, it is hard and durable and will take the heat of a pot.